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# FARM WORK

## *for City Youth*









# Farm Work for City Youth

This publication concerns an urban youth farm-work program. It is presented by the Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in the interests of America's town and city youth as well as its farmers.

The material is based on 4 years' experience with the Victory Farm Volunteers—youth recruited for farm work under the emergency farm labor program authorized by Congress each year since 1943. Pictures of this youth program are used to tell the greater part of the story.

Recruiting, organizing, and supervising young workers have been the cooperative task of the extension services of the Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges and their local county agent representatives, with generous help from schools and youth agencies.

If a farm-work program for city youth were not useful to the Nation's farmers, the Department of Agriculture could hardly presume that city youth were its concern. Youth is, however, a vital source of the labor used to plant, cultivate, and harvest our agricultural crops. And during the Second World War, youth played a new but important role as substitute "hired men" on the farm. Neither could the Department venture on the subject of work-experience needs for city boys and girls, were not educational authorities already agreed on its importance.

Youth need to learn how to work, and farm work offers many learning opportunities and teaches work habits.

Because some responsibility must be taken for making farm work available to town and city youth, this publication endeavors to kindle greater interest in keeping open youth's employment avenues to the farm.



# In the City Today...



The American city has abundant resources for educating its boys and girls.

In the cities are found many of our best schools, with a variety of courses and services and better-trained teachers. A wide assortment of activities in recreational, social, cultural, and business fields supplements these formal school advantages. The mingling of many people with different interests, occupations, and beliefs broadens still further the educational influences on city youth. And the growing boy and girl naturally benefit from these elements in city living.

This concentration of people and their way of life, however, deprive urban youth of an educational opportunity which is much more prevalent in sparsely populated areas. City boys and girls get too few chances to do honest-to-goodness work.

Why this scarcity of work for youth in the midst of all the city's productivity? It is partly the result of apartment-house living and modern conveniences. It is partly a reaction against grandfather's harsh ideas of keeping children busy. It is a reaction, even, from life on the farm, where many of today's city parents had a colorless childhood of too much work. It is the effect of child-labor legislation, needful as that legislation is. And much of it results from the city's need for year-round workers instead of part-time and seasonal employees.

Naturally people are concerned about this state of affairs. Educators, some parents, and many





others who are interested in the welfare of youth view this lack of work opportunities with alarm.

After all, Americans have a traditional faith that work is good for boys and girls. We believe in the necessity of work or creative activity for every individual if we are to live freely. To us, self-reliance seems essential to independence.

Educators say there is no factor in general education that is more important to consider than work. This is the opinion of the influential American Council on Education. And the Harvard Committee declares that youth needs experience in actual work, genuine rather than made work.

Educational people think someone should provide the chance for youth to work. This belief has already led to the establishment of work programs connected with the schools. It explains the educator's current interest in the farm, where no member of the household ever suffered from lack of work.

What farm work has already taught generations of Americans and what it continues to offer in the way of wholesome work experience to rural boys and girls can be made available to city young people through a farm-work program for city youth. Of course, farm work is not the answer to the work needs of all city boys and girls. But the farm, with its seasonal labor requirements, does offer ideal experience to those urban youth who are able to do farm work and show an interest in it. This was demonstrated during the war, when city young people pitched in to help so willingly with food production.

If the city, with all its people, its commerce, and its activity, has not enough work for its boys and girls in vacation times, it might well look to the farm for one solution to the problem.





# ... And on the Farm

American farms, like American farmers, are individual. They are as different as the hills and valleys and plains on which they lie. They are as unlike as the varied food and fiber crops they produce. From their rich granary comes everything from popcorn and cranberries to beef cattle, including innumerable vegetables and fruits, one-fifth of the world's wheat, two-fifths of its cotton, and more dairy products than from any other country in the world.

Manpower, horsepower, machinery, and millions of work hours are required for this tremendous production. And so the farm offers productive work in the Nation's most essential industry.

Life on the farm is closely connected with the outdoors and growing things. Farming as a business depends on nature's fundamental law of growth.

The farm is today a custodian of those ideals which established our Nation 171 years ago and have sustained it ever since—*independence, self-reliance, and self-government.*

These are a natural part of rural life and the agricultural industry.

All these—essential work, proximity to nature, the principles of freedom—are rich contributions of the farm. In them is so much that is worth while that the farm cannot be ignored as an instrument of education.

Not every American farm presents a way of living worthy of youth's association. Only on the better farms, operated by farmers of high type can youth be expected to benefit from the experience of living with the farm family. Fortunately, selection of good farms can be assured under an urban youth farm-work program conducted by responsible agencies.

The variety of farm labor needs gives some city boys and girls the opportunity to live on the farm while many others can be employed only for day work. But even this limited familiarity with farming is valuable in developing work habits and interpreting the scientific phase of agriculture.

No matter what youth's contact with the farm, it is bound to be a worth-while experience, and an educational one.





The good farmer is himself a textbook on stability and thriftiness, neighborliness and sincerity. He may be thrifty because it is good business, and neighborly because he is so dependent on his neighbors. He may be more sincere than his fellow citizen in town because his success depends less on his own personality than on hard work and the weather. Whatever the reasons, the good farmer is a man worth knowing.





# VFV's on the Job

A farm-work program for city youth—the Victory Farm Volunteers—has been in operation 4 years. Set up to increase youth labor for farms in wartime, it has also provided ample work and educational experiences.

Victory Farm Volunteers have made the most of their chance to earn some money on their own and participate in the Nation's war and reconversion efforts. Even with the war's end there has been small decline in their willingness to be of service.

These young people learn to do practically every kind of farm job. Many take the place of the prewar hired man, despite farmers' early fear that "no green kid from the city could be any good on a farm." If boy labor is scarce, girls tackle farm work, and many a girl from town learns how to drive a tractor and lend a hand during haying. Many other girls help out in the farm home.

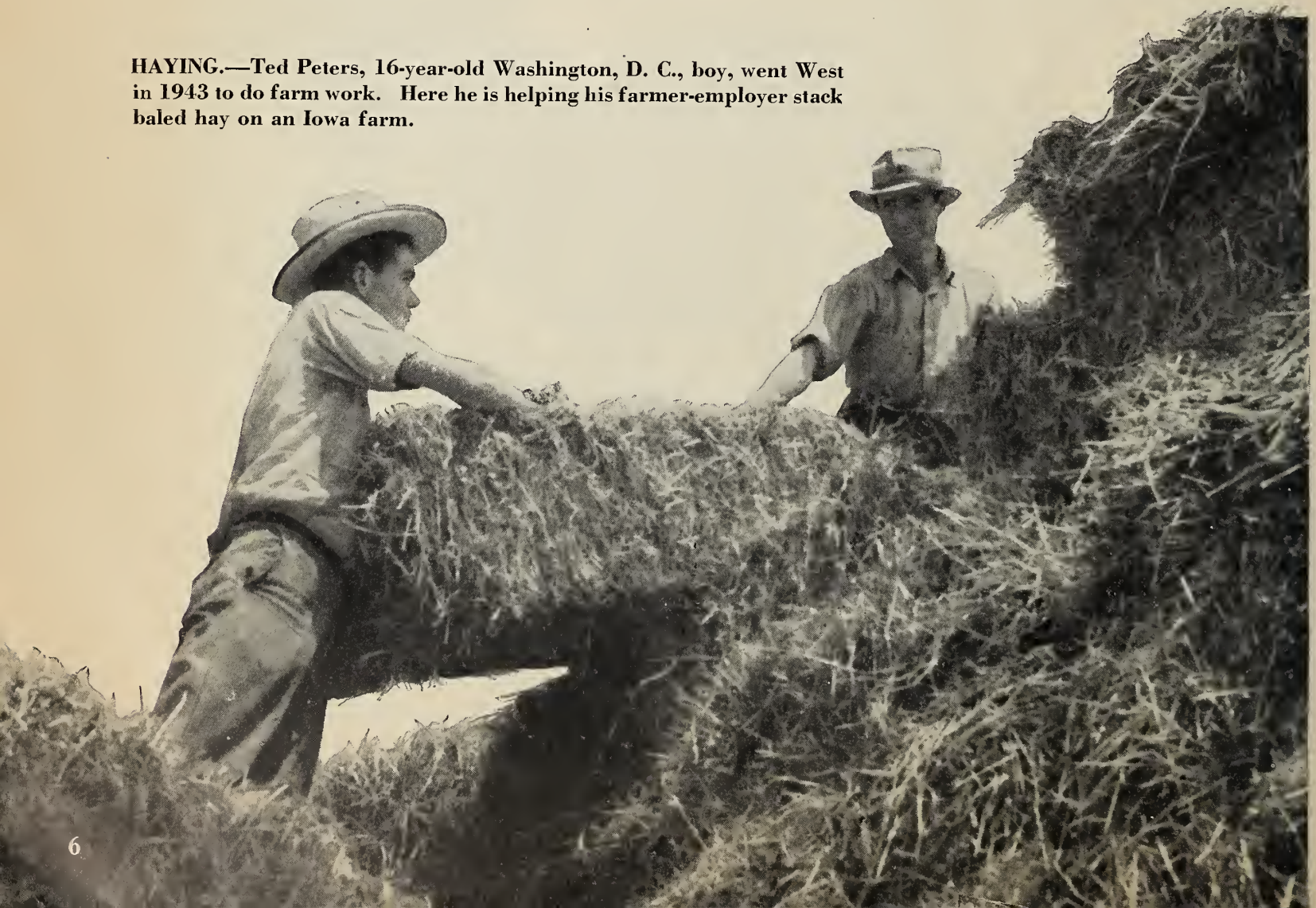
When it comes to harvesting the Nation's bumper crops of fruits and vegetables, whether the volunteer harvest hand is

boy or girl is of small moment. Town and city youth enlist in tremendous numbers to get vegetable fields and fruit orchards picked clean. Few snap beans would be harvested without the teen agers. Something like 90 percent of Maine's snap beans were picked by youth in the war years, and youth picked nearly every cherry grown recently in the State of Utah.

Only one in every five volunteer youths is placed in the farm home under the program. Far greater numbers are needed for harvesting jobs that allow these boys and girls to go back and forth to their homes at night. In addition, a small percentage are housed in youth camps.

To estimate the real contribution youth have made with their nimble fingers and tireless energies during the past 4 years would be hard indeed. There is no way to add up all the milking, livestock feeding, haying, grain shocking, planting, weeding, and picking they have done. Certainly their contribution proves that American boys and girls are not soft, but willing workers when there is work to do.

**HAYING.**—Ted Peters, 16-year-old Washington, D. C., boy, went West in 1943 to do farm work. Here he is helping his farmer-employer stack baled hay on an Iowa farm.







**ASPARAGUS.**—Cutting by high-school crews is an early spring task in many States. These girls are working on a Massachusetts farm.



**RASPBERRIES.**—This Portland, Oreg., boy works 6 hours a day during raspberry-picking season. Youth provide ideal labor for this work.

**CHERRIES.**—High-school girl picks cherries in California. Youth are important labor for cherries in Utah, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.



**PEANUTS.**—An Americus, Ga., high-school girl stacks peanuts. Southern youth also work in peaches, potatoes, cotton, and truck crops.





**POTATOES.**—An Idaho Falls high-school girl picks up “spuds” in Idaho’s famed potato harvest. Youth harvest some 65 percent of the State’s potato crop.



**BEANS.**—Youth crew weighs in snap beans they have picked in Cumberland County, Maine. Beans are harvested by youth in nearly every State of the Nation.

**DAIRYING.**—William Donlan’s home is on Staten Island, N. Y., but here he is (*below*) helping Farmer Clayton Kelley with the milking in northern Vermont during the summer of 1945.







**TOBACCO.**—VFV's at work in Connecticut, where thousands of youth are used in the tobacco industry.

**ODD JOBS.**—Theodore Stuart cleans out a ditch in a Colorado field. Shirtless boys need to guard against sunburn.

**COTTON.**—South Carolina boy and girl stop for water in cotton-picking season.



**CORN DETASSELING.**—This job requires thousands of youth workers. Above is an Iowa girl at work.



**WHEAT.**—Combines (*below*) move across fields in the Wheat Belt. Thousands of town boys harvest wheat.





# Learning From Farming

In the past four summers, several thousand New York City boys fulfilled a yearning that is especially strong in the youngster who grows up in the shadow of Manhattan's skyscrapers. These boys found a way, through the Victory Farm Volunteers, to the green fields and the open skies of New England and upper New York State.

Most of the boys went to the farm for at least 2 months. They lived in the farm home and usually came to feel like a member of the family.

Henry Hoeler was one of these boys. Henry arrived, a green recruit, at the Charles Winslow farm in Mount Holly, Vt., one June morning in 1945.

"Never before had I done such things," Henry relates, " \* \* \* milk cows, mow by hand, work on the hay loader, drive a team of horses, and feed the livestock and poultry.

"By going on a farm," the boy continues, "I learned that you don't necessarily have to have a city job or be a clerk or a mechanic to be happy. I found you don't have to be in a hurry all the time, and that you have time for yourself."

Better than reams of research on the subject, Henry's words suggest that his summer on the farm was educationally valuable. Mrs. Helen O'Regan, his teacher in New York, was certainly impressed by the results of the boy's summer in Vermont:

"Henry Hoeler was a wonderful boy before he ever thought of farming—a person with high ideals and the right atti-

tudes," Mrs. O'Regan says of him. "But Henry gained something for which he had been seeking—serenity and an inner peace, a chance to reflect and to observe nature's changes," she points out.

This teacher notes also what a summer on the farm has done for other boys in her school. Not all the boys were young people of deep feeling, like Henry. The boys of one group were completely influenced and molded, she believes, by their farm experiences. When they went away the first summer, "they were little boys, untried and unsure of themselves.

"Now they are men, responsible and dependable, who have grown up on the farm."

To another boy in Mrs. O'Regan's school, the summer on a farm meant independence, freedom from his own shyness and easy embarrassment. Now he takes part in assembly programs and makes his own decisions.

Throughout the Nation other teachers, high-school principals, superintendents of schools, and parents echo these comments about boys and girls who had farm-work experience as a result of the emergency food situation.

Youth themselves realize that learning about the farm is an education. As another New York boy puts it:

"You learn to figure things out for yourself. In some ways, I think you learn more in 2 months on a farm than in 6 months in school."

As one youth volunteer explained it: "The farmer tells you that a certain job is to be done, but he leaves it up to you to make certain decisions about how it should be finished."

Many farm jobs require working with others; sometimes the farmer, sometimes a hired hand or another youth from the city. Here two boys load fertilizer onto a truck on a New Jersey farm.



RESPONSIBILITY



COOPERATION



**LEARNING TO WORK.**—Boys and girls who learn to work learn how to be independent and so earn the right to live in a free society. This is Mary Freeman, of Amherst, Mass., picking strawberries.









NEW FRIENDSHIPS

Many farmers and their youthful hired hands from the city have become good pals. Here the guard of the Roosevelt High School football team, Minneapolis, eats lunch with his farmer-employer.



FARM OPERATIONS

All kinds of things are to be learned around a farm. The poultry industry itself is a fascinating business, as this lad is discovering on a Shenandoah Valley farm in Virginia.



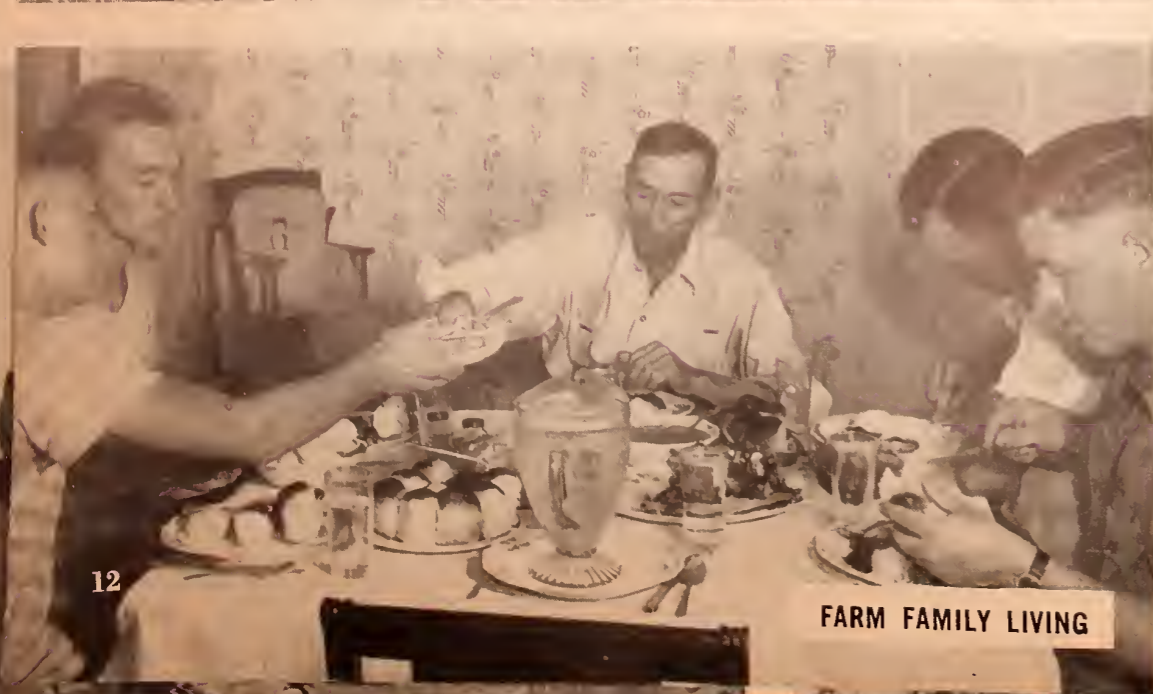
LESSON IN BIOLOGY

Science is the basis of today's best farming practices. These girls are learning the application of biology in producing hybrid seed corn before tackling a corn-detasseling job in northern Indiana.



HEALTH BUILDING

Sunshine and fresh air abound on the farm, and this New York City boy is soaking it all in on a Vermont farm. There is abundant opportunity for physical exercise as well.



FARM FAMILY LIVING

When city youth are placed in the farm home they are naturally treated as members of the family.

Boys learn tractor operation at a New York City high-school training class. Boys who miss advance training often learn to operate tractors on the farm.



MECHANICAL LEARNING

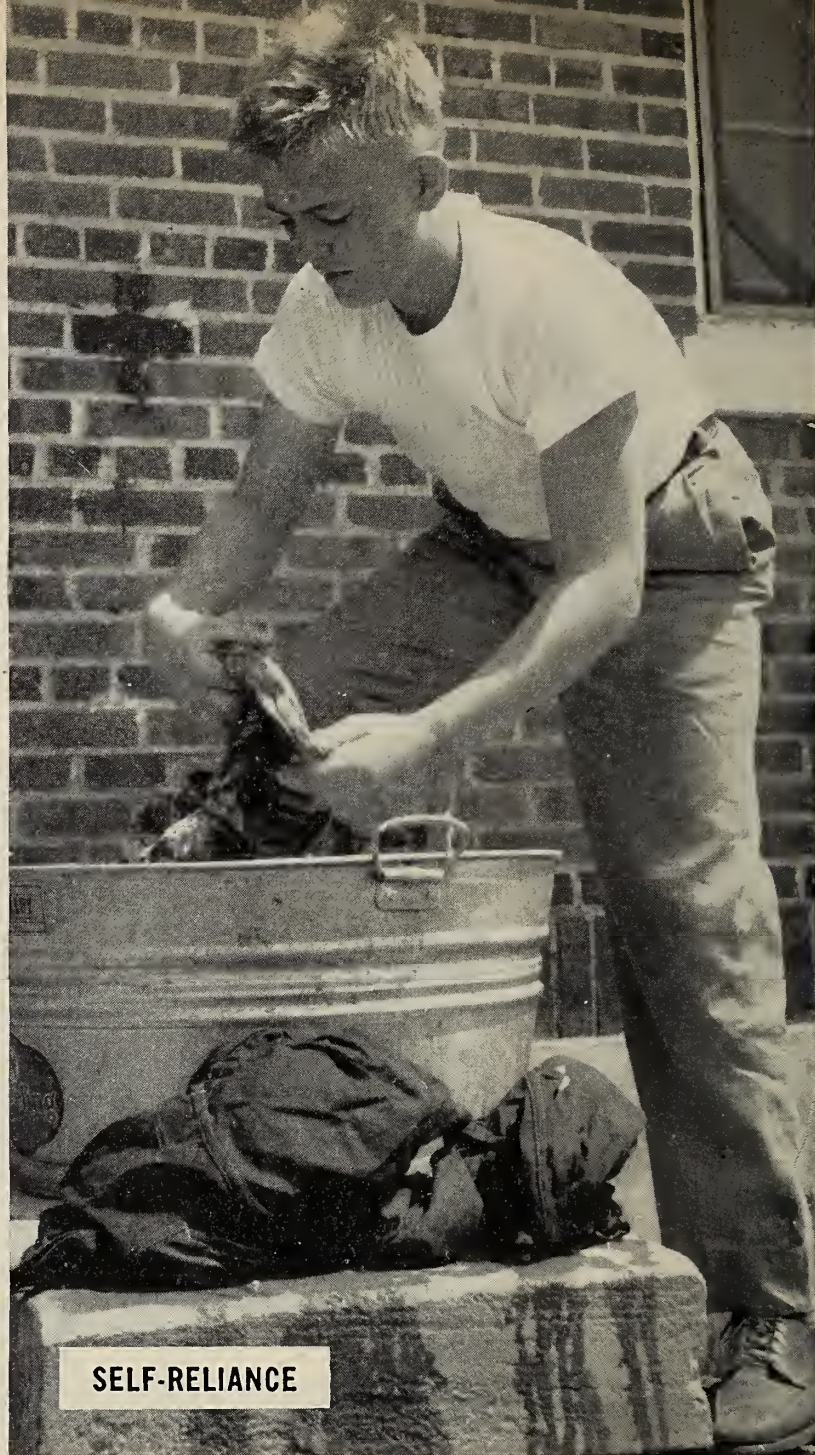




**EARNING MONEY**

An Oregon boy receives a slip of paper showing the number of boxes of berries he has picked, which determines his pay. His platoon leader, Mrs. Beulah Fish, organizes and supervises her own crew of youth workers under the Oregon system of platoons, which provides reliable labor to growers and a supervised work program for youth.

Youth throughout the country have earned some excellent wages during the emergency period. Many boys earned as much as \$10 a day harvesting wheat in the Plains country. After gaining a little experience, some boys who were placed in the farm home earned \$100 a month and more in their role as hired man. These are above-average wages, but they indicate that youth had increased opportunities to handle money on their own.



**SELF-RELIANCE**

Frank McGibboney does his laundry at a Baldwin County, Ala., potato camp. Frank was one of 800 boys at a camp in 1944 who helped harvest Alabama's big potato crop. Camp experience forces young people to rely on themselves, take care of their own personal needs, and solve their own problems.

Camps for young agricultural workers offered one of the most interesting educational experiences open to young people during wartime. The combination of actual work along with the comradeship of camp life assures a happy experience while youngsters engage in genuine production. California, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Indiana are among States that operated youth work camps on a fairly large scale.



# What About Supervision?

If a farm-work program is to provide an educational experience, youth must be supervised at work. There must be supervision if that program is to be successful at all or to achieve any cooperation from farmers.

This is the consensus of everyone familiar with the Victory Farm Volunteers. Supervision was the watchword of the Extension Service in recruiting and placing youth during the war. And it has certainly continued to sell itself to most farmers, who have to pay the cost of hiring supervisors.

Farmers have learned that supervision of youth workers increases individual production, makes field operations run more smoothly, cuts down labor turn-over, eliminates accidents, and harvests crops more quickly.

The welfare of boys and girls themselves is best served by supervision from adults interested in their well-being. A supervised program assures parents and the schools, which are personally concerned with the youngsters, that the farm work provided is both safe and profitable.

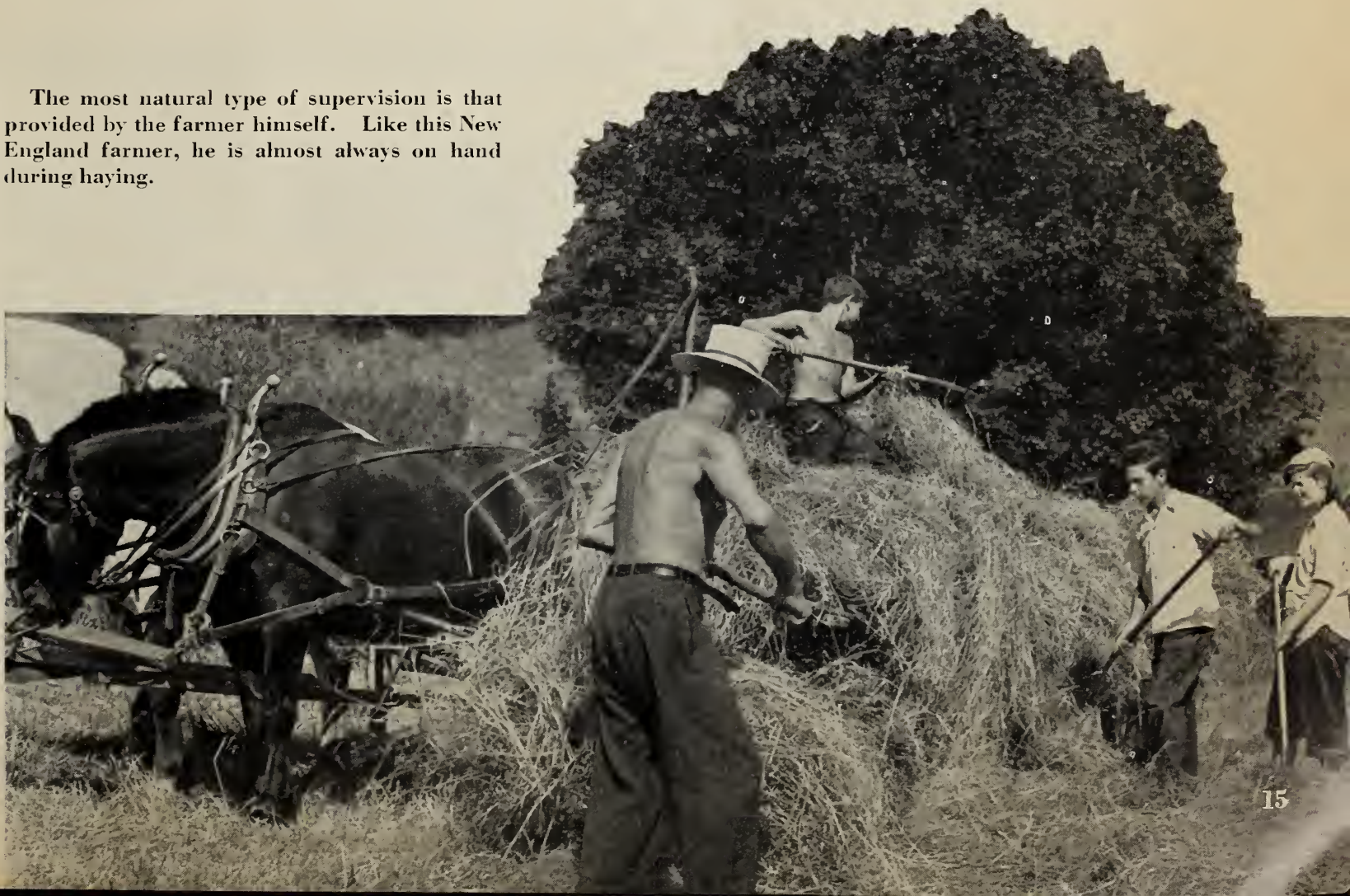
The most natural type of supervision is that provided by the farmer himself. Like this New England farmer, he is almost always on hand during haying.

Good supervision means that the boy or girl and the job are properly matched, satisfactory working conditions are provided, conscientious work is performed, youth welfare is protected, job training is included, and good employer-worker relations are maintained.

For the youth who is placed in the farm home, supervision is naturally provided by the farmer, who usually works at the same job or in a nearby field.

Special supervision is required for the large youth "day hands" to harvest fields. Transportation enters the picture here, adding new needs for good over-all program planning and safety measures. Larger numbers of youth in the fields call for more work supervisors.

"Our experience proves that the supervisors are the key persons in the entire program," comments Dr. Harrison C. Thomas, New York City assistant school superintendent, concerning youth's part in the farm labor program. "The success of the program in different areas is largely proportionate to the ability, interest, and industry of the supervisors."







Nowhere is supervision more vital than for farm labor camps. Supervisors must be on hand for transportation, recreation, field work, and in-camp activities. These Washington, D. C., boys are on their way to a farm labor camp in Maryland. Note the bus, which provides the safest type of transportation.

Another type of supervision employs a field foreman for group workers. This woman "field boss" employed on a farm in Washington State's Spokane Valley, is shown directing a young currant picker to his row. A foreman makes work go more smoothly in a harvest field.







The ideal supervision is provided under a platoon or crew system. The platoon leader hires out her crew of youngsters and so is responsible for good work in the fields and the well-being of her platoon. The two Oregon platoon leaders above are getting some pointers from Ralph Lose, Clackamas County farm labor supervisor.

One of the outstanding steps taken under the VFV program has been the provision of adult supervisors for day-hauls from city to farm.

Once urban boys and girls have been placed in the farm home to do farm work, it is best to have a county supervisor who checks up, like this one in Vermont.





# Helping Hand From the Schools

Without the cooperation of the schools, it is hard to conceive of a successful farm-work program for youth.

Schools gave indispensable help to the Extension Service in the organization of the Victory Farm Volunteers, and theirs has been an important influence throughout for safeguarding the welfare of boys and girls.

Almost everywhere that farmers need recruiting assistance, State and county superintendents, principals, and teachers are understanding cooperators. Local school people put in long hours of overtime work, often without compensation. They round up boys and girls, hold rally meetings, confer with the county agent, run training programs, and even go to the fields as supervisors.

The schools have undoubtedly been prompted by patriotic motives and community interest. But as they devoted time and energy to the farm labor problem, they found themselves engaged in a program that provides learning opportunities for their students.

Early in the war, the U. S. Office of Education lent its support by urging public schools to take the responsibility for recruiting and training student farm workers. In addition, schools render special assistance in selecting youth qualified

for farm work. Farmers want not only husky boys and girls but alert ones who can learn new tasks readily.

It is natural that schools insist on supervision of their students at work. Often they agree to recruit only when satisfied that boys and girls will be fairly treated in regard to wages, transportation, work hours, and working conditions. Extension Service accord with these supervision standards has made for better program planning.

The cooperative attitude of schools has also encouraged faculty members to take jobs as supervisors during their vacations. Scarce manpower during the war years made this source of personnel, experienced in working with youth, invaluable. Teachers and principals are often employed by farmers for organizing crews, training, discipline, field organization, and timekeeping. Extension employs other school people as supervisors of transportation, camps, and entire county farm labor programs.

Finally, schools have made a special contribution to food production by adjusting schedules and attendance requirements during spring planting and fall harvesting. Here wise program planning is desirable to keep this interruption of school activities at a minimum.

**Robert Freeman (right), Ramsey County agricultural agent, confers with John D. Thomas (left), assistant principal of Harding High School, St. Paul, Minn., on the recruiting of high-school students for farm work in the early spring of 1946.**





At Woodrow Wilson Vocational High School in New York City, Thomas Everett, a veteran "farm cadet" of three summers, and Jeanne Cloonan tack up a VFV recruiting poster on a school bulletin board for their farm adviser. Schools throughout the country help in the recruiting job by exhibiting posters like this one. School aid in recruiting also helps to win the confidence of parents, who often allow youngsters to go to the farm because they "heard about it at school."



Another scene at Woodrow Wilson High School. Charles Lawrence, faculty farm adviser, interviews students who are interested in farm work and helps them fill out applications. Farmers appreciate this assistance in selecting youth who would be the most physically and mentally fit for a summer job on the farm. Farm labor officials have discovered that whenever a large percentage of youth placements on farms prove successful, one of the important reasons is careful selection of the youngsters. Knowing the youths, schools can do this job well.



Some of the most valuable support given the VFV program by the schools includes training classes in the classroom and on nearby farms. These boys, in preparation for a summer job, are getting classroom training from Joe Anfinson, teacher at Phillips Junior High School in Minneapolis. Minneapolis and St. Paul schools, like others of the Nation, also set up on-the-farm training courses of great practical value.





# Better Understanding

"For years the city has been able to show the farm boy what it has that is attractive to him, but I believe this is the first effort anyone has made to systematically show the city boy what we have to offer him in farm life."

That is a Minnesota farmer talking. It is his view of the opportunities offered town and city youth under the Victory Farm Volunteer program.

In the environment of a good farming community, urban boys and girls learn many things. But just as they take home much that is fine from the country, they leave behind a new conception of the city people they represent. During the war, a farmer gained better appreciation of his neighbors in town when they pitched in so cooperatively to solve the farm labor problem. The closing of a city school to get late beans harvested, cooperation from youth agencies in town, the eagerness to help on the part of teen agers whom the farmer may have considered too sophisticated or frivolous for hard work—all these put town folks in a better light with the farmer.



Understanding works the other way, too. City boys and girls return from the farm with deeper appreciation for farm people. To their future duties as citizens they take a familiarity with farm problems which must result in wider public esteem for agriculture.

All this adds up to a more friendly feeling between city and country people. Certainly this kind of understanding between groups is imperative.

A new friendship is cemented when Gerry Nellis, a St. Paul, Minn., boy, meets farmer Roy Peterson. The introduction is performed by County Agent Bob Freeman. It is probably true that many city boys had never met or talked to a farmer before their experience as a VFV.







After the chores were done for the day, this city girl, who went to a farm in New York State, was glad enough to spend a restful evening in the farm living room with the family.

When city youth come to the farm they fit right into the social life of the rural community. These summer "visitors" often provide a reason for community picnics, field days, and dances.









# "I Don't Think I Ever

**I know now** what it means to put in a hard day's labor. I can better appreciate my parents' daily toil to keep me clothed, fed, and sheltered.

**I sure wish** that every American could see the wonderful job that the farmers have done during the war and are still doing.

**Vermont** is certainly a place to learn. I have not only learned to do some of the general farming, but as you know a new barn is under construction here at Mr. Meade's. This has opened a whole new book of things to learn and see.

**I learned a lot** about mechanics up there. I can tell you every part of a baler. I learned how to operate a tractor, and if anything breaks down I know what I should do. Next year I expect to learn much more.

**Before I went to work** on the farm I had very little knowledge of rural life, but during the 3 months spent there I developed a profound liking for it. So much so, in fact, that I have decided to become a veterinarian and plan to enter Cornell University next September.

# Learned So Much"

**One of my decisions** saved, or helped save, the life of a heifer that had strayed away from the rest of the herd. As I was going for the cows, I caught sight of the head of the heifer sticking above some quicksand. I mounted my horse and rode to the nearest farmhouse for help.

**During the past summer** we spent 6 weeks in a farm labor camp. To us it was a vacation, even though we worked. We learned how to get along with other girls and to cooperate. It did not matter what you were so long as you could "take it" and not complain.

**I worked hard** last summer and enjoyed every bit of it. I had nice living quarters and very good food. I went fishing about every Saturday night.

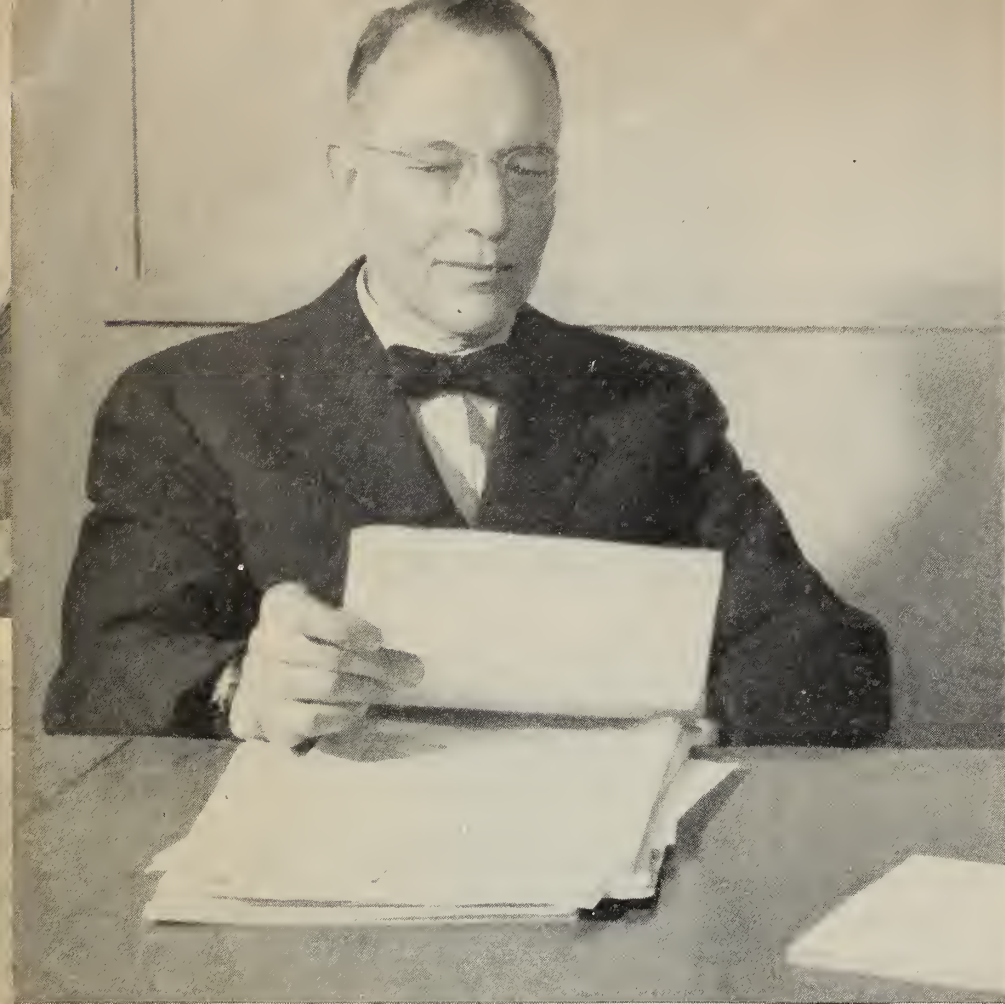
**Just being away** from home, meeting new people, and making new friends meant much to me.

**I gained** some nice muscle. That was the first thing the family noticed when I first saw them after I came home.

**From early morning** (5:30) to late at night I'm on the go, but it's fun. I don't think I ever learned so much.







"While many of our boys and girls have not made good, and a few of them have had bad experiences, I feel that on the whole, the program has been of great educational value. It has given to pupils self-reliance and self-confidence. It has improved health and physical development. It has taught many pupils the dignity of labor and the value of money. It has given city boys and girls an insight into the farmer's way of life. It has helped break down religious and racial prejudices on the part of both farmers and students.

"If adequate supervision is provided, I know of no better way of giving pupils work experience combined with experience in living in an environment quite different from that to which they are accustomed, at so low a cost."—Harrison C. Thomas, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, New York City; sponsor, Farm Cadet Victory Corps for New York City schools.



"During the war years young people from the cities made a significant contribution to the solution of the acute labor situation that confronted farmers. In the beginning it was only natural that farmers should be skeptical. By the end of the war the plan had succeeded far beyond the expectations of those who were responsible for its guidance.

"These values should be preserved. The public schools and the educational services working with farmers should take the leadership. \* \* \* It can well form the basis of a long-range program designed to foster a more sympathetic understanding between rural and urban people \* \* \* and make a significant contribution to an integrated national youth program."—Paul E. Miller, Director, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.







# **FARM LABOR PROGRAM**

**Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture  
and the Land-Grant Colleges Cooperating**

**Washington, D. C., APRIL 1947**